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Research article

Interpreting Politeness in Manuscript Rejections letters Using a Pragmatic and Stylistic Theory

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ABSTRACT

Manuscript rejection has become a growing concern due to the increasing emphasis on publishing in highly cited journals. Many manuscripts are rejected for reasons explicitly stated or unstated by editors, journals, or reviewers. In these rejections, polite forms have been instrumental in helping editors communicate with authors. This paper surveys manuscript rejections, politeness, and academic discourse, drawing on theories, contributions, and related works. Two manuscript rejection letters were randomly chosen and analysed using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and Leech and Short's stylistic approach. Analysis shows that editors have been keen to use politeness not only to mitigate the consequences of rejection but also to develop further connections with authors. Finally, the paper proposes several tips that can help authors, editors, journal reviewers, early-career researchers, and second-language researchers examine the significance, effects, and consequences of manuscript rejections, develop their publication skills, and expand their insights into future work.

تفسير رسائل رفض البحوث باستخدام نظريات تداولية وأسلوبية

الباحثة ساره هاشم محسن[1]، أ.م. محمد ناصر عبد السادة[2]
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المُستخلص

أصبحت رسائل رفض البحوث المقدّمة للنشر مصدرًا متزايدًا للقلق نتيجةً للاهتمامات المتزايدة بالنّشر في المجلات ذات الاستشهادات العلمية العالية. وتُرفض العديد من البحوث لأسباب يصرّح بها المحررون أو المجلات أو المراجعون، أو لأسباب لا يُفصح عنها. وفي رسائل الرّفض هذه، تؤدّي استراتيجيات التأدّب دورًا مهمًا في مساعدة المحررين على التواصل مع المؤلفين. تستعرض هذه الدراسة موضوعات رفض البحوث المقدمة للنشر، والتأدب، والخطاب الأكاديمي، بالاستناد إلى النظريات و الإسهامات والدراسات ذات الصلة. وقد اختيرت رسالتا رفض بصورة عشوائية، وحُلِّلتا باستخدام نظرية التأدب لـ Brown and Levinson والمنهج الأسلوبي ل Leech and Short. وأظهرت نتائج التحليل أن المحررين يحرصون على استخدام استراتيجيات التأدب ليس فقط للتخفيف من آثار الرفض، بل أيضًا للحفاظ على العلاقة المهنية مع المؤلفين وتعزيزها. وفي الختام، تقدّم الدّراسة عددًا من الإرشادات التي يمكن أن تساعد المؤلفين، والمحررين، مراجعي المجلات، والباحثين في بداية مسيرتهم العلمية، وباحثي اللّغة الثّانيّة على فهم أهميّة رسائل رفض البحوث وآثارها وتداعياتها، وتطوير مهاراتهم في النشر، وتوسيع آفاقهم البحثيّة في الدّراسات المستقبليّة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التأدب، رسائل رفض البحوث ، نظريات تداولية و أسلوبية

1. Manuscript Rejection

A manuscript rejection, also known as desk-rejection, refers to the journal editor refusing to publish a submitted article after editorial editing, peer review, or re-editing. According to Menon et al. (2022), manuscript rejection is common in academic publishing because scientific journals are contributors to leading research in terms of scientific quality, originality, practical accuracy, and suitability for the journal. The authors emphasize that rejection is part of ensuring the quality and integrity of scientific literature and can occur at various stages of the review process.

There are two main forms of manuscript rejection common in academic publishing: desk rejection, where editors reject a manuscript before peer review, and post-peer-review rejection, where reviewers identify weaknesses that prevent publication. The authors argue that both forms should be viewed as opportunities for authors to improve their manuscripts rather than as final failures (Teixeira da Silva and Nazarovits, 2024).

The manuscript content focuses on the quality and completeness of the research. Editors and reviewers examine whether the study poses a research question, follows an appropriate research design, uses valid methods, applies correct statistical analyses, and draws conclusions supported by findings. The article

indicates that inadequate methodological description, weak scientific basis, poor presentation, and insufficient discussion were among the most common weaknesses identified during the review process (Menon et al., 2022).

Ali (2021) identifies several reasons for manuscript rejection, including: poor study design, lack of originality, inadequate methodology, poor presentation of results, insufficient supporting graphs, inaccurate research claims, unsupported conclusions, weak statistical analysis, misleading titles, incomplete literature reviews, irrelevant discussions, poor writing quality, failure to respond to reviewers' comments, failure to follow journal guidelines, selection of an unsuitable journal, simultaneous submission to multiple journals, plagiarism, and violations of research ethics. Many rejected manuscripts exhibit several of these weaknesses combined, increasing the likelihood of rejection.

Although the rejection of manuscripts is often viewed negatively, it offers many important benefits to both researchers and the scientific community. It contributes to maintaining high academic standards by ensuring that only high-quality, authoritative original publications are published.

Studies of peer-review communications, such as those by Delgado et al. (2019), Zhang et al. (2021), Sönmez and Akbaş. (2023), and Kashiha (2025), suggested that peer-review reports often offer encouragement to evade personalization.

Rejection also allows for constructive feedback, enabling authors to improve their study design, writing quality, data analysis, and overall presentation before resubmitting their research (Menon et al., 2022). Through review, researchers benefit from reviewers' comments, strengthen their manuscripts, select more up-to-date journals, and avoid problems in future submissions. As a result, rejected manuscripts are more likely to be published eventually, while researchers gain valuable experience that contributes to their professional development (Teixeira da Silva & Nazarovits, 2024).

Despite these benefits, rejection ultimately has several disadvantages. It can cause disappointment, frustration, and stress, reduce self-confidence, and is particularly harmful among early-career researchers who invest significant time and effort in their studies. Publication is also significantly delayed, as authors must submit their manuscripts to another journal (Menon et al., 2022). Furthermore, some manuscripts of high scientific quality may be rejected due to limited space in the journal, editorial practices, high-quality selection criteria, or variations in review systems. In any case, the authors need to consider rejection a normal part of academic research and use it as motivation to improve their work. (Teixeira da Silva and Nazarovits, 2024).

Hyland (2016) posited that linguistic barriers could be for desk rejections, particularly in highly indexed journals, with most journal require strict and rigorous requirements for research and publication.

Manuscript rejection is an important part of the scientific publishing process that helps ensure the quality, credibility, and integrity of the scientific literature. According to Fathelrahman (2015), not all rejections indicate poor quality. Due to the peer-review process, the journal's scope, and other factors, many robust scientific papers are rejected for publication. Thus, the rejection of the manuscript does not mean a final failure but an opportunity to improve it. After evaluating the reviewers' comments, the author must decide on their comments and settle on a more appropriate journal.

2. Politeness in Academic Discourse

The term "politeness" is hard to define, since people have varying views on its essence. Some people associate politeness with showing respect and consideration for others, appropriate behaviour, and using phrases such as 'please', 'thank you', and 'sorry'. The varying perspectives imply that the measure of politeness is based on individual and social norms rather than a fixed definition. (Watts, 2003).

In an educational and academic context, politeness is important as it promotes clear communication and fosters positive teacher-student relationships. The right use of language is just as important as being able to speak it to interact well. Politeness strategies that help decrease conflict maintain mutual respect and make collaboration easier (Wangia and Otonde, 2020).

Politeness is an important concept in pragmatics that helps to maintain harmonious social interactions, reducing conflict and promoting mutual respect. Alhamid (2026) states that one of the components of pragmatic communication is the mitigation, which is realised through linguistic devices that reduce the impact of an utterance and thus preserve positive interpersonal relationship. Politeness is closely associated with Geoffrey Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, which consists of six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. These maxims guide speakers in expressing consideration for others by minimizing disagreement, showing respect, and demonstrating empathy.

Paltridge (2017) and Delport (2021) indicated that politeness is an underexplored area in academic discourse and it has been recently examined as a spinoff of the traditionally recognized on-campus communication.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed one of the most important theories of politeness by introducing the concept of the "face," which refers to an individual's public self-image. They distinguished between the "positive face," the desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted by others, and the "negative face," the desire to act freely without interference. According to their theory, speakers employ various politeness strategies to protect their own faces and the faces of others, thereby maintaining successful and respectful communication.

3. Previous Studies

Various previous studies are related to the current study. These studies examined manuscript rejection from various aspects.

Abarca and Moreno (2006) studied the use of politeness in employment rejection letters, analysing how writers deliver negative decisions while maintaining the applicant's face. The study concluded that rejection letters frequently combine negative politeness, such as apologies and hedging, with positive politeness strategies, such as encouragement and expressions of future cooperation. The study also suggested that these motivations consistently contribute to respectful communication in professional and academic settings, even after a strong rejection.

Jafari (2024) examined the role of intercultural discourse in the acceptance or rejection of academic articles, focusing on Iranian graduate students. The study demonstrates that cultural and rhetorical differences between Persian and English academic writing, along with failure to meet journal requirements, often lead to article rejection. It concludes that understanding intercultural discourse and journal selection criteria can improve the chances of publication.

O'Boyle (2025) studied the use of politeness in PhD rejection letters by analyzing 47 letters. The results showed that universities typically use indirect language, expressions of empathy and appreciation, and well wishes to soften the blow of rejection and maintain respectful communication with applicants. The study concluded that politeness helps minimize the negative impact of rejection while preserving positive relationships between institutions and applicants.

The study by Teixeira da Silva and Nazarovets (2024) reviewed the common reasons for manuscript rejection in academic publishing. The study concluded that research papers are often rejected due to weak language, lack of novelty, absence of effective implementation points, and failure to adhere to journal guidelines. It also highlighted that rejection is potential for authors to improve their chances of publication by reviewing their manuscripts and responding to reviewers' feedback.

Kovner (2025) discussed the role of rejection in editorial writing, clarifying that the rejection of scientific manuscripts is a normal part of life. A major and frequently cited reason for rejection is poor research design, failure to adhere to journal guidelines, or incompatibility of the manuscript with the journal's standards. She concluded that authors should view rejection as an opportunity to revise their work to ensure their manuscripts are suitable for submission to more journals.

4. Research Questions

To formulate the topic in a researchable scope, these questions have been designed:

1. What types of positive and negative politeness strategies are most frequently used in manuscript rejection letters?

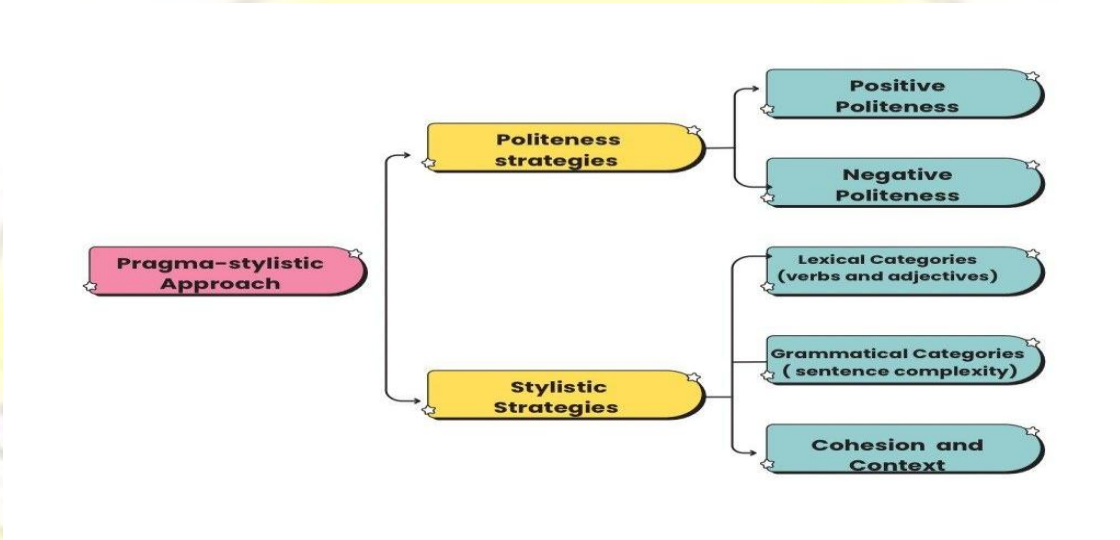
2. How do editors use linguistic choices to mitigate the face-threatening act of rejecting a manuscript?
3. Why do journal editors employ politeness strategies when communicating manuscript rejection decisions to authors?

5. Data and Method

The data for this study consist of two rejection letters available online. The first letter is from the BMJ pre-publication history archive, and the second is from the Indiana University Science blog. Both letters were selected as typical examples of academic rejection communication, and they are both authentic manuscript rejection letters. In addition, they contain sufficient linguistic content and represent naturally occurring examples of the analysis. This paper analyses only two manuscript rejection letters because such letters are not easy to obtain; two letters can manifest rejection strategies considering that most manuscript rejection letters utilize politeness; and two letters can prove that editor-author communications are researchable. The criteria for data selection and specification included authenticity (manuscript rejection letters from American and British journals, editors, and authors), comprehensiveness (letters contain all the elements needed for analysis), representativeness (letters feature polite rejections), and saturation (letters contain sufficient elements to analyse).

This study adopts a pragma-stylistic approach to analyse manuscript rejection letters. The study uses an eclectic model that combines pragmatic aspects, drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (1987), with a stylistic model by Leech and Short (2007). To maintain privacy and observe anonymity, all the information related to these rejection letters, including manuscript titles, authors'/editors' names, affiliations, countries, and dates, has been deleted. The figure below displays the model designed for analysis. Politeness encompasses two subcategories: positive politeness, in which the speaker mitigates undesirable effects, and negative politeness, in which the speaker inserts desirable effects. The stylistic features, as proposed by Leech and Short, are vocabulary (the lexical elements used in a context or situation), meaning (the intention implicated in these elements), and register (the domain in which these elements are used).

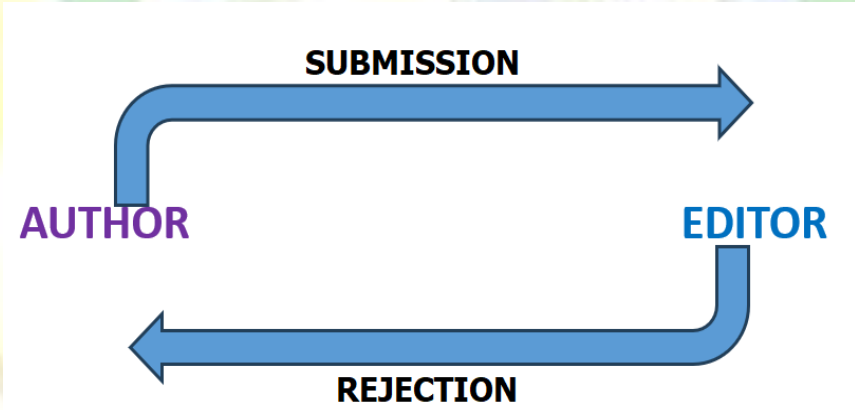
Figure (1) The model used in this study based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic approach



As this study deals with rejection, Beebe et al.'s (1990) model of rejection was chosen. It is a 14-strategy taxonomy for classifying rejection. Hence, it involves three direct rejections and eleven indirect rejections. The direct rejections are a performative act, a non-performative act, and a negative willingness. The indirect rejections are *regret, explanation, alternative, setting a future acceptance, a promise of future acceptance, a statement of principle; a statement of philosophy, an attempt to dissuade the interlocutor; acceptance that functions as a rejection*, and *avoidance*.

The figure below displays the process of manuscript rejections.

Figure (2) The scenario of manuscript rejections



As the figure above shows, a manuscript rejection occurs after an author submits a manuscript. Then, the editor communicates back with that author by issuing a rejection.

6. Significance

The importance of this study lies in its exploration of how politeness strategies are used in manuscript rejection letters. It aims to help communicate rejection respectfully and professionally. It also contributes to understanding politeness in academic discourse by applying pragmatic theories to context. The study findings are expected to benefit university students, journal editors, reviewers, and graduate students by raising awareness of effective communication practices during the publication process. Furthermore, it may help authors better understand rejection letters, ensuring the completeness of reviewer data and the quality of their handwriting for future success.

7. Objective

This study investigates the use of politeness strategies in manuscript letters in academic writing. It seeks to identify the politeness strategies employed by journal editors when reporting rejection. The study also explores how the linguistic strategies contribute to reducing the face-threatening effect of rejection on authors and maintaining respectful communication between editors and authors.

8. Analysis

8.1 Manuscript Rejection Letter 1

This letter is from BMJ , an international peer-reviewed medical journal published by BMJ Publishing Group. It is one of the medical journals publishing high-quality research, analysis, and evidence-based studies in medicine and health care. The rejection letter was sent to the author following peer review and discussion by the editorial committee regarding the submitted manuscript entitled “A Job Security and Health”.

Dear….

Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work. And thank you for your great patience with us. We sent it out for external peer review and discussed it at the Analysis manuscript committee meeting. Although the topic is of interest, yet after careful consideration we have decided not to publish your paper. Unfortunately, we do not feel the current manuscript is going to work for the BMJ… (The BMJ, 2020, p.2)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

The rejection letter suggests a careful balance between delivering a negative editorial decision and maintaining a respectful relationship with the author. Since the rejection of manuscripts constitutes a face-threatening act, the editor uses several politeness strategies to reduce the impact of the rejection and preserve the author's positive and negative face. The editor makes a gradual preparation of the author's interest, which is expressed by means of appreciations, explanations, and indirect language variations.

'Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work. And thank you for your great patience with us.'

This introduction is a good example of positive politeness as one of the most important strategies. Before rejecting the manuscript, the editor explicitly acknowledges the author's efforts in preparing and submitting it. Being thankful is a great strategy in interpersonal respect for the author's character and the positive atmosphere it develops in relationships.

Regardless of the editorial outcome, the editor should take a look rather than start with denial. First, the editor stresses the collaborative nature of the relationship between editor and writer. This appreciation is a way to meet the author's need for being valued and respected. In addition, the extra clause reinforces this appreciation by saying "Thank you for your great patience with us." author's willingness to wait during the review process. This acknowledgment portrays the editor as sensitive, fostering unity between editor and author before the decision is introduced.

'We sent it out for external peer review and discussed it at the Analysis manuscript committee meeting.'

These words contain another positive politeness strategy. The editor does not immediately reject articles for publication. He describes the process that the manuscript underwent. The public notice of external peer review will be discontinued. This explanation soothes the author's conscience, assuring them that it was not arbitrary or based on personal preference, but rather the result of a collective academic evaluation. By providing this background, the editor minimizes any concerns about injustice and protects the author. Moreover, this explanation enhances the credibility of the rejection by demonstrating the work of many experts who reviewed the manuscripts before the final version was created.

'Although the topic is of interest, after careful consideration we have decided not to publish your paper.'

This is a negative politeness sentence. The rejection is communicated by the longer, more general statement: "We have decided not to publish your paper." This indirect statement somehow softens the impact of face-threatening feedback, with evident reason for the focus from the author's defects to the editor's rejection of the work. Therefore, the refusal seems to be less personal and more institutional.

"Although the topic is of interest,"

One of the positive politeness strategies is this phrase that starts with praise before providing criticism. Even though the editor did not approve the article, he/she recognizes the worth of the research topic. This positive evaluation helps the researcher maintain self-confidence by highlighting the importance of the research and the journal's decision to publish it. Instead of the editor first pointing to one good thing, then dispensing with the idea of publication because there is none. This helps defuse rejection and promotes mutual respect between editor and researcher.

"after careful consideration"

This also contributes to negative politeness, as it highlights that the decision was made after careful consideration rather than a hasty assessment. This expression is a solace to the writer that the details of the manuscript have been the subject of a great deal of discussion. As such, the duty to reject seems to be based on a very careful editorial process, not upon personal judgment. This formulation minimizes the risk of potential conflict and allows the author to make a partial interpretation as part of regular peer review, rather than a personal one.

"Unfortunately, we do not feel the current manuscript is going to work for the BMJ."

The word 'Unfortunately' here in this sentence functions as an expression of regret. Instead of presenting the rejection as a neutral fact, the editors acknowledge that the decision may disappoint the writer. Expressions of regret are typical negative politeness devices that show the recipient that, during the difficult communication process, feelings were experienced.

"We do not feel the current manuscript is going to work for the BMJ"

The editor did not say the manuscript was not suitable or of poor quality: instead, he opted for a less specific verb, "feel." It is thought to be an opinion of the editor rather than a fact. Likewise, the words 'is going to work for the BMJ' were replaced with negative terms such as 'inadequate' or 'does not meet our standards'. This helps to somewhat mitigate the final rejection, allowing for the possibility that it was for another journal. Thus, the criticism concerns the manuscript's appropriateness for the journal, not the quality of the manuscript or research itself.

"The reviewers' reports are available at the end of this letter."

This sentence serves an informational purpose primarily and conveys a positive attitude. Show respect – provide constructive comments to the author. Rather than shutting down communication after rejection, the editor invites reviewers' comments, thereby encouraging revision and future improvement. This underscores that the journal's focus is on scholarly development rather than outright rejection of research. The final rejection strengthens ties between editors and authors and turns rejection into an academic opportunity rather than a final failure.

2. Stylistic Analysis

Positive verbs are one of the lexical features that are noticeable. The editor starts with the verb 'thank' and ’consider’, as follows:

“Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work.”

According to Leach and Short (2007), this is considered acceptable in the proper communication of clear behaviours and relationships between people. Here, the verbs *thank* and *consider* convey appreciation rather than authority. In contrast to the editor's claim to local power, these two verbs reflect the editor-author relationship of co-operation and respect.

There are also a few mental verbs included in the letter, such as the verb “feels,” in the sentence “We do not feel the current manuscript is going to work for the BMJ.” Mental verbs are stylistically significant because they express opinions, judgments, and cognitive processes rather than objective facts.

Rather than simply deeming a manuscript unsuitable, editors base their decisions on their assessment of the editing process. The verb "feels" lightens judgment and criticism by presenting rejection as an evaluation rather than an endpoint. This linguistic choice helps achieve a formal and kind tone.

The wording throughout the letter is also controlled. The adjectives used throughout the letter are similarly restrained. The adjective "careful" in the phrase "after careful consideration" emphasises the originality of the editorial evaluation; the adjective "external" in the phrase "external peer review" highlights the objectivity of the evaluation process. The use of the word "current" in the term "current manuscript" is to be interpreted as meaning that the manuscript being described is more recent than the other manuscripts in the collection. The evaluation will be made only based on the author's current manuscript and not based on his/her total work research capacity. This is a fine-grained lexical difference that allows possible future revisions to succeed and minimize rejection.

From a grammatical perspective, the rejection letter shows a high level of syntactic control that contributes to its formal academic style. Sentences tend to be complex and include subordinate clauses, which are used to give opportunities for a later presentation of the rejection; contextual information has been provided. This syntactic organization corresponds to the one suggested by Leach and Short, described as sentence complexity; information is not presented but rather presented unexpectedly. For example, the following sentence:

‘Although the topic is of interest, after careful consideration we have decided not to publish your paper.’

The subordinate clause (although the topic is of interest) comes before the main clause with the rejection. This way, the bad news is delayed, and the editor can start the article with a positive message and an

encouraging evaluation. The order of the grammar, therefore, also helps to minimize the effect of the rejection. The rejection would have sounded the same if the main clause had come first.

The letter also used first-person plural pronouns, particularly "we" and "us". For example:

"We sent it out…"

"We have decided…"

"We do not feel…"

The plural "we" normally refers to the editorial board and editors and reviewers, not to any one editor. Therefore, it is characterized by its objectivity, collaboration, and justification.

Moreover, the sentences are logically organized with subordinate clauses that show temporal sequencing (after careful consideration) and concession (although). These structural frameworks reinforce the relationships between ideas and guide the reader to the reason behind the editorial decision. That's why the rejection seems sensible and evidence-based.

Each sentence follows the last, so the sentences are not separate but form a coherent sequence of communication. The editor gratefully acknowledges that the editor is good, explains that the editor rejects the review process, and directs the writer to the reviewers' reports. This logical, organizational sequence forms the basis of the overall purpose of the message. Academic language is repeated for lexical cohesion.

Lexical cohesion is achieved through the repetition of these words: *paper*, *manuscript*, *publish*, *review*, and *reviewers*. These lexical terms are repeated to show unity within the text and to acknowledge that the message pertains to academic assessment rather than face-to-face contact.

The role of reference is important in the presentation of text. The pronouns "we," "us," and "your" repeatedly connect the editor and the author throughout the letter. Thus, the words "the present manuscript" are used to refer to the submitted article, without introducing unnecessary lexical variation. These tools help maintain the historical context in the text and help it endure the evaluation of printing presses.

The letter is clearly of the genre of institutional academic writing, from a contextual point of view. The editor does not write to reflect his or her personal taste, but as the voice of the program editor representative of an academic journal. It is this institutional context that accounts for the ubiquity of formal, carefully mitigated evaluations, vocabulary, and objective grammatical structures. Every stylistic choice helps to preserve the credibility of the journal and also a respectful relationship with the author.

8.2 Manuscript Rejection Letter 2

This letter is from the article published on the blog of ScIU (2020), Indiana University's science communication, entitled “Share our rejections,” written by Dan Myers. He discusses the importance of openly sharing rejection letters in academia. The author believes that feeling rejected is a normal phenomenon in scientific research. These experiences affect professional and academic life, and sharing them can help lessen the stigma of failure, promote perseverance, and enable students and researchers to achieve their objectives in the face of obstacles.

" Dear Mr. Myers

I very much regret to have to tell you that publication entitled, "Verification causes uncertainty in solar systems" (Mr. D. T. M.) in our journal is not recommended. An explanation for this decision is given in the attached review reports (and on https://aaaaaaaaaaaa/). I hope that the comments contained therein will be of use to you. Thank you for your interest in our journal.

*With kind regards, " (*Myers, 2020, para. 3)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

The rejection letter employs negative politeness to minimize the threat of delivering unpleasant news while respecting the recipient's feelings. The writer begins with the phrase “I very much regret to have to tell you”, which expresses empathy and hesitation before offering the rejection. This indirect introduction will soften the blow of bad news and prepare the writer for potential disappointment. This indirect approach will help ease the impact of the negative information and prepare the writer for possible objections.

“I hope that the comments contained therein will be of use to you,”

The statement reduces the sadness by drawing the writer's focus to the fact that the reviewers' comments have provided constructive feedback. The writer is protected by these linguistic options, avoids confrontation, which gives the person receiving the message the dignity of maintaining his or her face before the unfavorable decision.

There are also aspects of positive politeness in the letter but fewer than the negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness is reflected in the editor’s attempts to maintain a respectful cooperative relationship with the author. Expressions such as:

“Dear Mr. Myers,”

“Thank you for your interest in our journal”

These statements recognize the author's contribution and effort, and demonstrate respect. In addition, the final line, "With kind regards," maintains the professional's goodwill and indicates that the manuscript was rejected, not the authors. By expressing appreciation of the author's submission and keeping the tone courteous. The editor strives to maintain a positive academic relationship and to stimulate future submissions throughout the message.

2. Stylistic Analysis

The lexical choice is formal and professional; there is emotional control, reflecting conventions of academic publishing. These options, such as "*I regret", "I tell", "I recommend", "I hope",* and *"I wish",* show politeness and institutional authority by saying *'I thank'. I feel sorry for (someone/something), I am sorry for (someone/something) empathy before the rejection,* and *"I hope"* redirects the focus toward an improvement in the future instead of rejection.

The list of adjectives is short but significant. The intensifier 'very much' is used to enhance the. The adjective is used to simply designate the 'regret' word and promotes sympathy with the editor. Writing reports straightforwardly, avoiding emotional biases; the final line, "with kind regards," adds to the respectful tone. In general, the vocabulary is neutral, objective, and does not use word(s) that have strong feelings or opinions.

The grammatical structure of the letter consists mainly of complex and compound-complex sentences, allowing multiple pieces of information to be presented concisely and coherently.

"I very much regret to have to tell you that publication entitled… is not recommended."

This sentence has a main clause and a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction that, layering the sentence structure. This complexity arises from the postponement of the rejection announcement after the moderation of the message's impact through an expression of regret.

Passive voice is a key factor. The term "is not recommended" draws less attention from editors and presents it as an institutional outcome. The passive voice is used in the following sentence: "explanation for this decision is given in the attached review reports" highlights the review rather than the individuals responsible for the decision. These grammatical choices reinforce the objectivity expected in academic communication.

The letter has a clear structure, good coherence and logical sequencing, and uses suitable cohesive devices. It is structured clearly, starting with a statement of regret, followed by a demonstration of how the topic is related to the opening section, and concluding with the topic's main points to a formal rejection, with an explanation of other sources of information, and to encourage reconsideration of solving the issues raised by the reviewers for completeness and ending politely. This progression eases recipients' comprehension of the letter's contents.

Lexical cohesion is accomplished by the repetition of reference to the manuscript and publication process. Indicators include use of terms such as publication, review reports, comments, and decision. These terms were introduced into the same semantic field, further emphasizing the national context of scholarly publishing. These words are in the same semantic field and support the institutional setting of scholarly publishing. The use of "you" and "we" to keep the sentence's meaning clear is called referential cohesion, which establishes a tone between the editor and the author while maintaining a formal tone.

9. Discussion

1. There is a considerable amount of politeness, particularly positive politeness, in the two rejection letters. The table below displays the frequency of politeness in the two rejection letters. Positive politeness is higher than negative politeness, suggesting that editors favored respect over rudeness toward authors.

Table (1) Pragmatic devices or politeness in the two rejection letters

Letter	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness
1	3	1
2	5	2
Total	8 (72%)	3 (28%)

As this table shows, positive politeness and negative politeness are higher in Letter (2), which indicates that the editor in Letter (2) focused more on the mitigation of rejection consequences.

2. The table below displays the frequency of stylistic devices in the two rejection letters. Meaning is the most frequently detected stylistic device in the two rejection letters, suggesting that editors conveyed gratitude, appreciation, advice, (dis)satisfaction, justification, and both weaknesses and strengths. Similarly, register is the lowest stylistic device as the setting and context of communication is familiar to both the editor and the author.

Table (2) Stylistic devices in the two rejection letters

Letters	Vocabulary	Meaning	Register
1	7	10	1
2	6	12	1
Total	13 (35.5%)	22 (59.5%)	2 (5%)

3. Most strategies of rejection are indirect rejections rather than direct rejections. Such rejections are usually accompanied by regret, excuses, expectations, justifications, explanations, and futurity.
4. Rejection in the two letters was meant to convey more positive politeness than negative politeness, as seen in the way editors negotiate rejection.
5. Stylistic devices are quite variant due to the implied or indirect purposes, which could be regret, contrast, dissatisfaction, or expectation.
6. In both rejection letters, editors expressly or implicitly utilized remedy, advice, avoidance, and indirectness to lessen the consequences of rejections.
7. Both rejection letters share certain differences and similarities. Both letters use pronominal choices extensively, probably to emphasize communicative roles and minimize impoliteness. Both letters use gratitude and thankfulness frequently, suggesting that editors thank authors as a form of experience-sharing. However, the letters differ in several ways, particularly in letter (1), which provides more details than letter (2). Letter (2) demonstrates more regret than letter (1), because the editor in letter (2) focused more on rejection-minimization than on any future connection or collaboration. Letter (1) does not elaborate on rejection reasons, while letter (2) underlines rejection in detail.
8. The five pragmatic and stylistic devices elaborated on in both letters show divergence with respect to prominence. Hence, the editors in both letters underlined meaning, as it conveys visible functions that can keep the setting of rejection interpersonal and practical.

10. Conclusions

1. As for research question (1): What types of positive and negative politeness strategies are most frequently used in manuscript rejection letters? Both politeness subtypes are used in the rejection letters, with positive politeness being the more frequent one.

2. As for research question (2): How do editors use linguistic choices to mitigate the face-threatening act of rejecting a manuscript? Editors choose words and phrases carefully to avoid being viewed as impolite, as evidenced by the several expressions of gratitude and appreciation in the rejection letters.

3. As for research question (3): Why do journal editors employ politeness strategies when communicating manuscript rejection decisions to authors? Most editors resort to polite forms, such as praising manuscripts, thanking authors, emphasizing positive aspects, and citing strengths, to convey to authors that rejections are free of bias, personal issues, or non-academic interests.

4. Rejection in the two letters has been structured in such a way as to embrace factual or realistic facts, rather than personal drives.

5. Following Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of rejection, both letters displayed indirect rejections as indicated in the lexical choices used to construct rejection. These direct rejections implied regret and explanation.

6. Manuscript rejections remain researchable, not only because they feature a new genre of academic discourse, but also because they can give insights into how to analyse academic communications.

7. Continuous collaboration among authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers is essential to improving the integrity and effectiveness of the peer-review process and minimizing the unnecessary rejection of high-quality research.

8. Manuscript rejection contributes to the development of scientific knowledge by ensuring that published studies meet rigorous academic and ethical standards while encouraging researchers to continually improve the quality of their work.

9. Sustained cooperation among authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers will be important for enhancing the integrity and effectiveness of peer review and minimizing the rejection of high-quality research.

10. The rejection of a manuscript enriches scientific knowledge by leading to the publication of only high-quality research studies that meet the desired academic standards and ethical requirements.

11. Implications

1. Second- or foreign-language writers can benefit from manuscript rejection letters in writing-related aspects. These authentic, expert-issued documents can help writers develop their academic writing and enrich their fresh writing experience.
2. Manuscript rejection letters can help fresh university researchers, particularly MA-level students, improve their academic writing skills. Improving academic skills can help those researchers base their writing on a solid foundation.
3. Manuscript rejection letters can help mid-career researchers, especially in-service university faculty members, improve their future submissions and avoid possible rejections. Manuscript rejection letters can help those faculty members reconsider the editing, proofreading, and quality of their future submissions.
4. Manuscript rejection letters can help experts and late-career researchers, who plan to be journal reviewers, structure quality rejections. Those experts and researchers can benefit from manuscript rejection letters to consider new strategies to review manuscripts and shape professional and expert-inspired rejections.

12. Limitations and Literature Gap

While numerous and sufficient previous studies on written rejections in academic discourse exist, most have adopted a one-sided analytical approach. That is, they adopt feature-specific analyses. Notwithstanding this gap, manuscript rejections remain problematic for editors and reviewers alike, not only for authors.

As far as limitations are concerned, the reasons why manuscripts are rejected cannot be fully elaborated on in a single work, not to mention English-only publishing and gatekeeping practices in most globally

recognized journals. Most journals, particularly those indexed in global metrics and indexes, never explicitly state rejection reasons, even though in some editor-author communications they cite linguistic or scope-related reasons.

These backgrounds explain the many studies on manuscript rejections from linguistic, technical, and sociocultural perspectives. Furthermore, several limitations affect an all-encompassing analysis of manuscript rejections, including the difficulty of obtaining them from journals, the brevity of rejections, and the private nature of rejections as personal emails rather than public-domain documents. Manuscript rejections are not free to download materials. Rather, they are private emails that most journals do not disclose easily. When some journals make available a few manuscript rejections online for readers, they do so just to highlight desk rejection.

13. Recommendations

1. Journals should offer courses, training, or workshops on reviewing and reviewership for researchers and early-career reviewers to help them master the key skills of author-editor communications.
2. Universities in Iraq are encouraged to collaborate with global indexing bases, such as Elsevier, Springer, and several others, to facilitate cooperation between Iraqi journals' editors and reviewers and their counterparts in these global indexing bases. Such collaboration can help Iraqi editors and reviewers develop and improve their editorial practices.
3. Non-native and second-language researchers should improve their research skills to avoid rejections. A key reason of most manuscript rejection is the linguistic structure of manuscript, which is problematic for not only non-native researchers, but also for researchers whose majors require quality language edition, such as life sciences, medical disciplines, and other science areas.

14. Further Research

Future researchers can compare manuscript rejections issued in different languages or by non-English journals to pinpoint any sociocultural or linguistic discrepancies. Researchers can examine manuscript rejections across disciplines, such as the humanities and the sciences, to reveal whether knowledge domains affect rejection styles. Researchers may examine the construction of manuscript acceptances to find how editors frame acceptance. Rebuttal letters, sent from authors to editors after desk rejections, are also a researchable topic for further work.

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